

2005 White House Conference on Aging Held December 11-14, 2005

The White House Conference on Aging is a decennial event held to develop recommendations for the President of the United States and Congress on issues, policy, and research in the field of aging and to assist the public and private sectors in promoting the dignity, financial security, health, and independence of the elderly population. This year, the conference occurs at the same time the first wave of the baby boomers, those born between 1944-1964, prepare for retirement. A pivotal time in U. S. history to assess aging in America and focus on the lives of older Americans.

Previous White House Conferences were held in 1961, 1971, 1981, and 1995. In 1950, President Truman directed the Federal Security Administration to hold a national conference to assess challenges posed by the changing demographics of the nation.¹ This served as an initial exploratory forum for addressing the concerns of older Americans. According to the website for the conference, “past White House Conferences on Aging have contributed to the establishment of many key aging programs, such as Medicare and Medicaid, the Older Americans Act, the Supplemental Security Income program, Social Security reforms, and the establishment of the National Institute on Aging.” The conferences are also considered to have led to the creation of a national nutrition program for older persons, such as Meals on Wheels, and the establishment of the National Aging Network.

A Policy committee is made up of 17 members, appointed by the President and Congress. The president selected nine members, and Congress selected the remaining eight members. The Committee’s role is to provide general direction and guidance for the Conference. Some of the duties of the Committee include making recommendations to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human services to facilitate timely convening of the Conference; formulating and approving a proposed agenda; making recommendations for participants and delegates; and establishing the number of delegates to be selected. Delegates are selected by the Governors, Congress, and the National Congress of American Indians. The Policy committee voted to invite 1200 individuals to serve as delegates to the 2005 White House Conference on Aging. The delegates have the responsibility of presenting the recommendations to the President and Congress to help guide aging policies for the next decade and beyond. These 1200 delegates represent Governors of all 50 states, the U.S. Territories, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia, the national Congress of American Indians, members of the 109th Congress, and national aging and other allied organizations, academic institutions, business and other stakeholders in the field of aging.

For more information on the White House Conference on Aging, please visit their website: www.whcoa.gov.

¹ www.whcoa.gov